

The Masters Athlete

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Gear Made for Masters Athletes, But Loved by Every Jock

Featuring: ShowDown

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TECH

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Yakima ShowDown Boat/Paddleboard Roof Rack (\$449)



Photo: Courtesy of Yakima

Last summer, when Yakima's Garret Barnum invited members of the [Oregon Ocean Paddling Society](#) to test some of the company's sport-rack concept products, he didn't know that a bunch of little old ladies would show up. The gray-haired women—one of them a 79-year-old paddler—declined any help from Yakima's Top of Car category director, or anyone else for that matter, when loading their 50-pound sea kayaks on vehicles.

"Maybe they weren't as able-bodied as they once were, but they're still strong," says Barnum, a five-year veteran of the iconic Lake Oswego rack company. "They don't want to lose their independence or ask for a second person's help."

This maturing, still-athletic population, says Barnum, "is a big driver for us in terms of development." Yakima isn't alone in such thinking. A significant number of gear companies today are committed, in terms of both marketing and design, to older athletes. "Our product is built around an aging population," says Evan Wert, president of [Icebug USA](#), which makes high-traction athletic footwear, much of it armed with steel-studded soles. "People who are younger don't think so much about falling down on the ice."

Such falls, however, hurt at any age. Which is one reason why the following roundup of products has plenty of appeal for a wide variety of buyers. "If what we develop helps me load a rack easier, I want to use the product," says Yakima's Barnum. "Doesn't matter that I'm under 40."

The retirees who helped to create [this roof-rack attachment](#), which can carry either one large sea kayak or two standup paddleboards, loved it for a central reason: no weightlifting-style, clean-and-jerk move needed to put a boat atop the vehicle.

Instead, testers only had to lift their boats about waist-high. The low-profile rack may live on the roof, but its support arms telescope out before extending over two feet down alongside a car or utility vehicle. Easily cradle and strap down the boat or board, raise it to roof level via a stable pivoting motion, and slide everything into place over the car. "If you get back to shore earlier than your friends," says Barnum, "you don't have to wait around for someone to help you load up."